

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 075541

EXDIS MILITARY HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN, CAIRO,
DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, USUN NEW YORK, JIDDA, KUWAIT 051615Z APR 77.

QUOTE: S E C R E T BEIRUT 1526

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS, SY

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 1504

1. CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS THIS MORNING,
APRIL 5, FOR TOUR D'HORIZON. HE STARTED OFF BY ASKING ME
WHAT WAS SITUATION IN SOUTH. I SAID I HAD

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HOPED TO HAVE HIM TELL ME, AND THEN PROCEEDED TO GIVE
HIM SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS IN OUR 1504. BOUTROS WAS SILENT
FOR A MOMENT AND THEN ASKED ME WHETHER SITUATION WAS
SERIOUS OR ALARMING. I ANSWERED THAT I THOUGHT IT WAS
SERIOUS BUT NOT YET ALARMING. HE AGREED AND THEN
ADDED THAT HE NEVERTHELESS FOUND WHAT WAS HAPPENING
VERY DISQUIETING.

2. BOUTROS SAID THERE HAD BEEN EVIDENT SHIFT IN SYRIAN POSITION REVEALED IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS AND THEIR POSTURE VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS. TWO WEEKS AGO SYRIANS HAD BEEN AMONG THOSE ADVOCATING STRICT INTERPRETATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS, REGARDING BOTH ENTERING CAMPS AND DISARMING PALESTINIANS. NOW, AS INDICATED BY ARTICLE IN YESTERDAY'S AL-BAATH, THEY HAD SWITCHED TO POSITION THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS SHOULD WAIT RECONSTITUTION OF LEBANESE ARMY, WHICH WAS GOING TO BE MATTER OF MONTHS. LEBANESE HAD IMPRESSION THIS SWITCH BROUGHT ABOUT BY PRESSURE FROM KUWAITIS AND SAUDIS, AND POSSIBLY EGYPTIANS.

3. SECOND MANIFESTATION OF SYRIAN CHANGE OF POSITION WAS FACT THAT NOW THEY WERE SUPPORTING PALESTINIANS AGAINST LEBANESE CHRISTIAN FORCES IN SOUTH. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD SIGNALLED THIS DANGER TO US IN A CONVERSATION WITH ME ALMOST A MONTH AGO (BEIRUT 1102, NOTAL). WHAT HE FEARED THEN HAD COME TO PASS. SYRIANS COULD NOT AFFORD TO STAND BY IN FACE CONTINUED COOPERATION BETWEEN LEBANESE CHRISTIAN FORCES AND ISRAELIS AGAINST PALESTINIANS. TO DO SO WOULD OPEN THEM TO CRITICISM THEY THEMSELVES COOPERATING WITH ISRAELIS. HE THOUGHT RISK OF SYRIAN-ISRAELI MILITARY CLASH NOW APPRECIABLY INCREASED.

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4. BOUTROS THEN ASKED WHAT LEBANESE COULD DO ABOUT SITUATION. I SAID I FRANKLY DID NOT KNOW.

5. COMMENT: AS USUAL, BOUTROS SEEMED TO KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT DETAILS OF SITUATION ON THE GROUND. HE WAS VERY SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT WE UNDERSTOOD TAIBEH WAS BACK IN HANDS OF LEBANESE FORCES. HE CALLED BRIGADIER KANAAN AT LEBANESE ARMY HEADQUARTERS AND GOT CONFIRMATION OF THIS. KANAAN ALSO CONFIRMED STORIES OF LANDING OF AIN JALOUT BRIGADE WERE UNTRUE.

6. BOUTROS'S CONCERN ABOUT SYRIAN INTENTIONS IS NEVERTHELESS FOUNDED ON RATIONAL ANALYSIS OF WHAT IS OCCURRING. SAME CONCERN SHARED BY SHIA DEPUTY FROM SOUTH, ABDUL LATIF ZEIN, WITH WHOM I HAD LUNCH AFTER SEEING BOUTROS. ZEIN SAID IT IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHO WAS ON FIRST. ISRAELIS, WHO HAD SUPPORTED INITIAL LEBANESE FORCES' OCCUPATION OF TAIBEH WITH HELICOPTERS AND TROOPS, HAD STOOD BY ON SUNDAY

AND ALLOWED PALESTINIANS TO REOCCUPY TOWN.
SYRIANS IN FORM OF SAIQA, AS WELL AS FATAH, HAD
COOPERATED WITH REJECTIONISTS IN LATTER OPERATION.
HE HAD JUST BEEN TOLD SYRIANS WERE ALSO IN MARJAYUN
IN FORM OF SAIQA. (PERHAPS THE "PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS"
REFERRED TO IN PARA 3 OF OUR 1514.) ISRAELIS HAD MADE
FUSS TO PREVENT 500 SYRIAN REGULAR FORCES FROM
ENTERING NABATIYYA AND NOW HAD UPWARDS OF 2500
SYRIAN FORCES UNDER ANOTHER NAME EVEN CLOSER TO
THEIR BORDER. THEY MUST HAVE SOME GAME GOING,
BUT HE COULD NOT FIGURE OUT WHAT IT WAS.

PARKER
UNQUOTE VANCE

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NNN

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